

## Abstract

This research investigated the influence of reduced household income on dropout rates during COVID-19 pandemic within public secondary schools in Lower Yatta Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya. The primary goal being to examine how financial constraints at the household level contributed to school discontinuation among students amid the health crisis. The study adopted the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunities as advanced by Sherman and Wood and cited by Njeru and Orodho (2003). A census approach was applied to include all 28 public secondary school principals, while 153 teachers were sampled from a total teacher population of 247. The research tools were validated through expert assessment to ensure both face and content validity. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS Version 26. The research revealed 73.3% of tutors and 84% principals observed that students dropped out due to reduced family income during COVID-19. The study recommends that parents encourage students to resume school rather than seek casual employment and urges community sensitization through chief barazas to discourage child labor.